

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on March 28, 2013.

Members Present:

Lars Nielson, Jr. Alyssia Yingling
Dr. Robbi Venditti Karina Wilhelm
Merlin Ellis Nancy Aposhian
Peggy Wilson

Members Absent:

Joe Cooper

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein Rob Schultz
Tom Wilson Sunnee O'Rork
Jean Kaminski

Guests:

MB Finnerty
Amy Foster-Busch

Lars Nielson, Jr., Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Peggy Wilson noted a typo under Staff Reports – Arizona Museum for Youth. Under the first bullet, fifth line down, the third word is research, but should be researched. With the corrected typo, Peggy Wilson made a motion to approve the November 29, 2012, minutes; Dr. Robbie Venditti seconded the motion, and the Board members present unanimously agreed. The minutes will be posted on the City's webpage.

Public Comments: No members of the public were present. Amy Foster-Busch, VTC contractor with Light Rail, came as a guest of MB Finnerty to see her presentation.

Update from Light Rail – MB Finnerty

MB Finnerty, public art administrator for Valley Metro, presented a Power Point updating the Board on the six public art pieces along the Central Mesa extension – see Exhibit A.

The artist for the Alma School Station is Daniel Martin Diaz. His design has cut metal panels of trees in the entryway and cut metal panels of geometric patterns in place of louvers on the station platform. In the center, he will have a circular cut metal panel with colored glass panes inserted and a section that rotates in the center.

The artist for the Country Club Station is Ed Carpenter. His center design is a beautiful piece made of metal and glass that is reminiscent of a cactus flower. The dichroic glass reflects a variety of colors and will be lit at night.

The artist for the Center Street Station is Ralph Helmick who has designed a towering 40-50 foot piece of cut metal incorporating profiles of Mesa citizens. He will be taking pictures of actual people attending festivals at Mesa Arts Center (MAC) and will use them as the profiles in the design. The tower will be at the west entrance to the platform and will be lit at night.

The artist at Mesa Drive Station is Mary Lucking. Her design is themed to reflect the parks and gardens in the area, the architectural look of the LDS temple nearby, and the sharing of family life and telling of stories. Large sculptural books along the platform will share stories the artist collects in the community. The entryway will be made of pergolas and the center large panels of cut metal will feature a large male figure and female figure.

The artist at the Morris TPSS station is Mary Shindell. She has designed cut metal screens with stylized pecan trees, which will attach to the TPSS building.

The artist for the Hibbert Signal House is Roberto Delgado. He is designing photomural tiles that will attach to the wall surrounding the Signal House building.

The attached Exhibit A has renderings of each station design.

The final TPSS and Hibbert Signal House designs will go before the Design Review Board on Wednesday, April 3. There may be one final public meeting to show the TPSS and the Center Street art sometime this spring. Stations will begin to be constructed around 2014 – the art elements are usually the last piece put in place. The grand opening is scheduled for 2015.

Ms. Finnerty said that designing the extension to Gilbert Road has started and when artists are selected for that alignment, she would be back to update the Board as that unfolds.

Update on AMY 2.0 Project – New Brand – Sunnee O’Rork

Sunnee O’Rork, Youth Museum Director, presented a Power Point on the Arizona Museum for Youth’s (AMY) new brand, name, and logo. See Exhibit B.

She began by giving a quick history of the Museum. Founded by John and Jack Whiteman, the Museum began in 1978 and was the first Children’s Museum in Arizona. The Museum formed a partnership with the City of Mesa in 1987. AMY began as a storefront at Poca Fiesta mall and has moved/been renovated four times. The last renovation, in 2010, was a response to member and visitor surveys (see results in Exhibit B, page 5). The renovation included cutting out a brick wall to create a unified lobby space with a skylight, and moving the store behind the front counter.

AMY received a leadership grant of \$60,000 from the Virginia G. Piper Trust to launch their Image for the Future Project. Additional gifts from the AMY Friends and the City of Mesa totaled \$40,000 supporting this two-year research and rebranding project. In Phase I, the Museum worked with Reach Advisors, James Chung and Susie Wilkenburg, who conducted a major survey on AMY programming and were able to benchmark the results against their national Children’s Museum research. In Phase II, John Willie of Creative Engine worked internally and developed the brand strategy. He utilized a crowd sourcing website for logo development called crowdSPRING. In Phase III, Steve Carr, Kur Carr Group, Inc. developed the communications, marketing, and social media campaign to present the new brand in concert with Latonya Jordan-Smith, marketing specialist at AMY, and Sunnee O’Rork.

The i.d.e.a. Museum (imagination, design, education, art) will open in early 2014. Ms. O’Rork thanked her colleagues Cindy Ornstein, Rob Schultz, and Tom Wilson for their tremendous support throughout the project.

A holographic postcard that says “Goodbye” to AMY and “Hello” to i.d.e.a. Museum was passed around. On the back are past and upcoming dates of events. Sunnee asked the Board to stay tuned as the Museum undergoes a period of transformation until it is the i.d.e.a. Museum.

Board member Alyssa Yingling commented that she was excited to see the new brand and logo. She thought the old logo looked dowdy and yet when you would go into the Museum, it was such fun. She was happy to see the logo match what is inside. Several other Board members stated that they too like the new logo and improvements.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee O’Rork

In addition to the update on the museum rebranding, Sunnee O’Rork share the following:

- On April 20, the Museum will host a family weather day in conjunction with the “Weather or Not: Art With Atmosphere.”

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- The Mesa Grande Cultural Center opening ceremony, on January 19, had 18,000 attendees and the Center has been averaging approximately 500 visitors per month. The Center will be open through May 15 and then close for the summer months, opening again on October 1. This will allow staff the time to evaluate the facilities, complete marketing plans, and further develop their educational programs.
- The NASA exhibition, “Destination Station,” left the Museum on March 27. It is replaced by “What is It?” An exhibition that contains interesting “stuff” from the Museum that is not easily identifiable or will be unfamiliar to young audiences (i.e. an old phone booth, etc.).
- Staff is re-doing “Cretaceous Seas” in the permanent exhibition area of the Museum.
- Over the past several years, the Museum has had major donations in the collections area. In the last few months they received donations of southwestern textiles and Pre-Columbian artifacts. Altogether, the objects are valued at approximately \$2M. The Museum intends to build an exhibition around some of the new objects titled “Art of the Americas.”

Alyssa Yingling commented that she went to Mesa Grande with her mother who uses a walker. She was able to get around very well on the site; however, handicap parking was difficult. With a car in the space next to the handicap space, they were unable to get into the car. Tom Wilson said the space where the other car was parked is not a parking space and cars are not supposed to be there – he will check into that to make sure it is marked adequately.

Dr. Wilson stated that they worked to preserve the six acres of sacred space in its original condition, with as little modern impact as possible. The space was designed to welcome visitors in the rammed earth Welcoming Center, leading them into a tranquil look at the past, using the self-guided interpretive trail. The Museum staff created the interpretive trail signage internally.

Alyssia Yingling asked what determined the placement of the statue of the Hohokam man. Tom Wilson said the thinking was to have him facing the trail, looking at the past. She did not think it was visible enough from the trail and would have liked to have seen it better. Dr. Wilson said that they were just trying it out in that location, that it is not permanent and can be moved. The statue was a donation to the Museum from a man in Scottsdale. The Museum was thrilled to get it, as it is perfect for the site. The placement of the statue will be part of this summer's evaluations.

Karina Wilhelm noted that some of the verbiage on the panels in the Visitor's Center was difficult to read. Dr. Wilson said they were transported to the site directly from the Museum's exhibition of Mesa Grande in the galleries, and may not remain at the Center or may be revised. This is another area that will be reviewed this summer.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- MAC is continuing to develop a partnership with Benedictine University. The University offers a Fine Arts Program and the partnership will enable them to hold studio classes at MAC, without having to build a studio facility. After meeting with the University's Dean and staff, MAC is close to a final written agreement. We hope to formalize the partnership within the next couple of weeks. Benedictine will offer four classes in the fall here at MAC and will build from there. For the initial period this is a simple rental of the space, although in future there may be other aspects to the partnership.

Dr. Robbi Venditti asked how that might impact MAC students. Rob Schultz said he did not think it would have much of an impact. MAC students will be given the information that Benedictine will be offering for-credit classes at MAC, and if they would like to take a for-credit class, it would be easy for them to register with Benedictine. Cindy Ornstein noted that MAC's Studio programs will have first choice on times for classes. Benedictine would use times not currently being used. A question was raised about maintaining the classroom spaces – about who will have that responsibility. Mr. Schultz responded that we could add in the contract that the room be left in the same shape it is found. He also stated that there would be a materials/supplies fee included in the rental fee.

- The InFlux Project is a collaboration between Mesa, Chandler, Scottsdale, Tempe, Glendale, Goodyear, and Phoenix. The idea of the project is to offer an opportunity for public artists to install temporary projects in storefronts – however, at MAC it is in the theater lobby under the Ikeda stairs. This is the third year for the InFlux Project, and Mesa's first time participating. MAC's artist is Moira Geoffrion of Tucson and her art piece will be on display until late fall or early winter. Mesa will likely participate in the project again next year. The participating cities are working together on an idea of a June bus tour to see each art piece in each city. This project was at low cost for Mesa to be involved in a Valley-wide effort.
- MAC was approached to provide an artistic element to an event that Dana Park was holding on Saturday, March 29, from 10am – 2pm for art displays and 10am – 4pm for activities. MAC provided Dana Park's marketing team with contact information for stilt walkers, jugglers, and performing and visual artists to enliven their storefronts and sidewalk areas. Dana Park promoted MAC's spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity and MAC promoted the event at Dana Park. MAC and the museums look forward to the possibility of working with them on this event again.
- The NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) grant for the Placitas Project that Mesa, Tucson, El Paso, and Albuquerque are participating in is moving forward. This project involves creating a public art piece that draws attention to each city's unique, central plaza area using the idea of the traditional Placitas, or town square. A national artist will be hired through an RFP administered by El Paso to work with the four communities; that artist will work with two local artists in each of the four communities to develop a site-specific project, based on the theme of the placitas and other shared topics such as climate, borders and heritage. The total budget for the project is \$135,000, the NEA grant was \$60,000, and the four cities are making up the difference. This is the first time the National Endowment for the Arts, in nearly 50 years, has funded a multi-state consortium like this, and for Mesa to be participating is exciting. The project has been held up a bit because each city had to go to its State Historical Preservation Office to get approval that the central plaza space identified for artwork does not have an impact on any historical structure or space. As soon as that is confirmed with each state, artist selection will begin - hopefully in the next few months, with project installation later in the year.

Director's Report – Cindy Ornstein

spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity was hugely successful with approximately 40,000 visitors in five days, and we had great media coverage. The success will help us in our plan to acquire more sponsor support for the event next year.

We did turn in our grant proposal to ArtPlace, the project for the activation of the north end of campus and will hear by the end of May about our status.

Artspace, the potential project with the Artspace organization for artist live/work space or space for arts organizations/creative industries, is moving forward. We have verbal commitments for funding for the Market Study, which will be launched in the fall.

This is budget time at the City, and Arts & Culture made its presentation to the City Manager this week. It is a tight budget, as media has reported there is a shortfall in the budget at this point. What that means is there is a gap to close – recovery has occurred such that sales revenue is the same as it was in 2006, but expenses have increased at a faster rate, particularly in benefits and medical expenses. The City is working diligently to close that gap. No across the board cuts or reduction in work force have been requested. Most of the requests for additional items in the Arts and Culture budget are being funded through current or new revenue streams from new growth, new programs, or shifting funds within the Arts and Culture budget.

Performing Live for FY13-14 is close to being finished. We usually begin the season with 60-70% of the shows booked, with new shows added before single tickets sales begin in the summer, and throughout the season. There will be a season preview event for members and media on May 9.

MAC is also speaking with Wilkes University about using our spaces for their Creative Writing program, but on a smaller scale than Benedictine University.

MAC is involved in a planning process for a substantial partnership with ASU Polytechnic/College of Technology & Innovation. We already have a strong relationship with ASU Tempe and ASU Poly, but are looking at a more comprehensive, multilayered partnership over 4-5 years; everything from how we provide resources and support them in their own student entertainment planning and activities on campus, to the Arts and Culture Department using spaces in their buildings to create a satellite program that serves the southeast valley. They have several arts studios and a theater that are underutilized and they would love to see them activated, and the Arts and Culture Department is interested in exploring ways to reach new audiences in an area that is growing rapidly. We may be involved in events on the ASU Poly campus, and students and faculty may be involved in activities that help activate and build traffic in downtown Mesa.

This summer AMY and MAC are collaborating with ASU Polytechnic engineering professor, Shawn Jordan, who was involved with the STEAM machine project during spark!, in doing a series of STEAM Machine camps – AMY will serve elementary students and MAC will serve middle and high school students.

The three Mesa Arts and Culture facilities have toured ASU Polytechnic campus (AMY will tour tomorrow, Friday, April 5), and on the same day, Polytechnic students involved in student government or on the Activity Board will tour MAC, returning to tour the Museums at another date. Getting to know one another's campus helps everyone involved to visualize and dream about what might be possible.

Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only

Alyssa Yingling visited Arizona Museum of Natural History, Arizona Museum for Youth, and Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum with young relatives, who enjoyed the Museums tremendously. She did not get to spark! until late Sunday afternoon and things were winding down at that point, but she thought it looked like a great program. She was surprised at how many people, especially children, were at Mesa Contemporary Arts, more than she has ever seen there before and commented on how pleased she was to see so many people take advantage of the opportunity.

Peggy Wilson stated that she attending spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity and every time she sees the yarn bombing it makes her smile. She attended Southwest Shakespeare Company's Hamlet and The Tempest, which she thoroughly enjoyed. Ms. Wilson also was present at the grand opening ceremony of Mesa Grande Cultural Center. Ms. Wilson had nominated Mesa Arts Center for a Governor's Arts Award, but because she did it rather late, she realized she needed more letters of support; however, someone else nominated MAC and although MAC did not win, staff shared that we were honored to be nominated, and thanked Peggy for her effort.

Karina Wilhelm said she attended the Mesa Grande Cultural Center grand opening ceremony and spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity, but did not arrive until later Friday night. They were still able to see a few performances and thought the environment looked great. She also attended the Martin Luther King celebration and found it most interesting. She had her children, so they were mostly in the children's area. Some of the content of the performers offended a woman, who was with her children. Cindy Ornstein noted that the festival is a rental, not presented by MAC, but she would take Ms. Wilhelm's comments to the organizers.

Lars Nielson, Jr. inquired why Theater League was not returning as part of Mesa's Performing Live series next season. Cindy Ornstein replied that staff has decided to hold off on Broadway for next year allowing time to look at other options, because the season available was not a good fit for us. Mesa is fortunate to have local performing arts organizations, such as Mesa Encore Theatre, which provides excellent performances of Broadway shows, and many other good theater companies and performances, including Southwest Shakespeare. MAC will offer some Broadway-type performances, such as a great Cirque show.

Merlin Ellis went to the Phoenix Art Museum to see Maya Lin speak. While there, he ventured into a wonderful photography exhibition. The photographer, William Clift, spent the last 40 years photographing Shiprock, NM, and Mont St. Michel in France. The photographs were intermingled making it difficult to distinguish between the two sites – very interesting and beautiful.

Nancy Aposhian said she and her family attended the Mesa Grande Cultural Center opening ceremony as well. She thought her son would be bored with it, but he thoroughly enjoyed it. Ms. Aposhian reported that she volunteers with Arizona Opera and is learning appreciation for what goes on behind the scenes for performances at Symphony Hall. She attended a performance of the Mesa Youth Symphony. Ms. Aposhian mentioned that she has a friend who has a son who is an ASU Engineering student and worked with the STEAM exhibit at spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity. He loved what Mesa did with the spark! festival and he, and the other students, loved the experience. He said he had no idea that Mesa had such a nice facility and that the atmosphere was perfect for the event. He said the students would definitely be back as well as their families. Nancy Aposhian attended the unveiling event for the i.d.e.a. Museum and found it spectacular and fun. Because she lives downtown, she cannot wait for Light Rail service to begin and is excited about the Goldwater Library – exciting things happening.

Dr. Robbi Venditti reported that she has been taking a glass blowing class at Mesa Arts Center. She asked a woman in her class from Wyoming what attracted her to this facility when she could have gone anywhere in the US, and she replied the web page. She liked being able to find an apartment close by and walk to take glass-making classes.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting date is May 23, 2013, 4 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Ornstein".

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department